

A N
A C C O U N T

OF THE

Extraordinary Deliverance

O F

THOMAS CROSS,

One of the *BRISTOL-Gazette Newsmen*:

Who was overfet in a small Boat, crossing the *New-Passage*, on the River Severn, on *Sunday*, Nov. 6, 1774, in company with seven other Persons, who were all drowned.

L O N D O N: Printed by R. HAWES,
And fold at the FOUNDRY, in Moorfields, and at
the Rev. Mr. WESLEY's Preaching-Houfes
in Town and Country. 1776.

[Price ONE-PENNY.]



A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

This Narrative is published at the request of several persons both in Bristol and Wales; and it is hoped will be a caution to every one, who does not understand managing a boat, not to meddle with any thing belonging to it on the water; as many accidents have happened through imprudencies of this kind, as well as the following.

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T H O M A S C R O S S .

ON Sunday, Nov. 6, 1774, I came to the New-Passage in my way to Bristol, and about four o'clock in the afternoon, with seven others went into the small boat. As I was coming to it, I was rejoicing to think I should soon be at home with my wife and family. When I was going into it, I considered, where I could sit, to be out of the way. While I was settling myself, I observed the painter (the rope that fastens the small boat to the great one) lying over the oars, and was going to remove it, thinking, if any thing should happen,

perhaps the oars may help us. But I thought again, I never met with any misfortune yet ; and why should I be afraid now ? Soon after we fet sail. The wind was very high, so that we run at the rate of nine or ten miles an hour. As I sat in the bow of the boat, the waves beating over wetted me a good deal. My fellow passengers laughed and bade me, Not take more than would do me good. I told them, " I hope I shall not." The wind was strong in the East, and the tide came in very fast. Being almost over, a gentleman's hat blew off. He desired the boatmen, to turn the boat and go after it : but the rest of the company objected to it, and the boatmen absolutely refused, knowing it could not be done without danger. On this he went to the helm himself, and turned the boat with such violence, that it immediately overset. * Eight of us were instantly plunged into the water. We called aloud for help : but there was none. One or two sunk at once ; some hung by the boat, or by

* The following are the persons that were drowned ; a gentleman about 16 years of age ; a butler of Mr. Lewis's ; Mr. Webber, linen-draper, of Bristol ; a man and his wife from Cardiff ; and two boatmen.

by the cloaths of others ; but all of us were covered over by every wave that came. The woman held by her husband's coat, and cried, " Help me, my dear, help me." He answered, " My dear, hold fast by me;" but quickly both were under water. Coming up again, she cried, " O what shall we do ? My dear, help," and disappeared. The poor man forgetting himself, cried out aloud, " O, my dear is gone ! My dear is gone ! What shall I do ? O my dear, my dear !" till he sunk, and rose no more.

In this situation, six of us who clung to the boat, were driven above half a mile up the channel : when one and another, losing his strength, was washed off, till only two beside myself were left.

When the boat overfet, I lost my senses for a few moments, but recovering, found myself on the surface of the water, and seeing the boat four or five yards off, made toward it, and soon laid hold on it. But I was soon beat off by the waves : I laid hold again, and was beat off again and again till my strength was gone. Yet I floated and sunk by turns, till seeing the mast
above

above water, I got hold of it, but it sunk with me. When I came up again, I saw the bow of the boat above water; I got to it; but was soon washed off, and sunk again. As soon as I came up I saw the mast and sail above water. I made to it, and rode for near five minutes, which was the longest time that I was above water, from the beginning to the end.

Expecting every moment to be my last, my cry was, "Lord, have mercy upon me, and prepare me for my awful change!" But what I felt, I cannot express. I did not fear death, but judgment; so that I did not cease one moment crying for mercy, that I might stand before God with joy.

Being beat from the mast again, I floated awhile, and then sunk, not expecting to rise any more. Yet I strove, against hope, believing in hope, still praying, though I looked for no human help. Many times I took hold of the boat, and I was as often beat off again. At length I caught hold of the cloaths of one of my fellow-sufferers, which I held till we both went under water together. Coming up again, I caught hold on the skirt of his coat,
which

which I held as fast as I could, till looking on me, with distress and anxiety, he struck off my hand, and I sunk. When I came up, I saw an oar by me; I got on one end of it, which sunk with me. Rising again, I got it between my legs, fitting as near the middle of it as I could. But being at first too forward, I was continually pitching with my head in the water, till by degrees I got further back. I now could keep my head above water, yet I expected nothing but death, being very sick, and having swallowed so much water, that I knew I could not hold out much longer.

About this time, I looked if I could see the boat. And I saw it, but no one near it. So I judged, I was the only one left alive, and that I should soon follow the rest. But presently after, being ready to burst with water, I fell a vomiting. This eased me much, and gave me fresh spirits, so that I thought I could sit upon my oar all night, although still I had no hope of deliverance, being covered over by every wave, and at the best up to my chin in water.

The night coming on so fast, that the people who had come running down to the shore
could

could not see me any longer, and therefore were going away. As I could just see them move; my heart sunk within me, and I called as loud as I could: for though I had little expectation of it, yet I thought, if I should reach the shore alive they might give me some help: whereas if I was alone, I must perish there. So in the intervals between wave and wave, I cried to them with all the strength I had; and when I could not call to them, I cried earnestly to the Lord, to prepare me for death. While I was so doing, I was driven so near the shore, that I could hear men talk, and thought I knew some of their voices, I called them by name, and asked them, "How far am I from the shore?" One answered, "Not far; have a good heart: you will be there soon." I still prayed to the Lord, to prepare me for death, as I expected nothing else; thinking, if I should get to shore, yet the cold has so seized me, that I cannot live.

Soon after, I felt my feet touch the ground. I could not believe it was so, but thought, it is one of them that are sunk, and perhaps he may catch

catch hold of my legs and pull me down. Fearing this, I took up my legs. I did the same quickly after, when I touched the ground again. But soon after, when I touched it a third time, I tried to stand upon it, and found it would bear my weight: but it was so dark, that I could not see where I was. However I cried out aloud, "I am on ground." Presently one of those that stood on the shore, pulled off his cloaths, and came, and took hold on me, and brought me out of the water. I said, "Lord help me!" The man said, "The Lord *has* helped you, or you would not have been here now." It was then about eight o'clock; so that I was near four hours in the water, in this dreadful situation; and the place I landed at was about a mile and a half from where we were overfet.

The shore was a foot or two deep in soft mud. Some others were now come down, two of whom led me between them a little way; but then, finding my strength was quite gone, they laid me down on my back, and taking me by the hands, drew me on, to the end of the mud. They then endeavoured to lead me between two; but perceiving I could not stand, first one and then another carried me, half
alive

alive to Mr. Baker's, a farmer, near the New-Passage.

Here all possible care was taken of me. As soon as I came in, they forced me to take some rum and water. But I could take very little, my stomach being again quite filled with salt-water. They soon undressed me and put me to bed, between warm blankets. Quickly after they applied heated bricks to my feet; for I was so deadly cold, I did not expect to live; yet I was thankful to God, that he had thus far delivered me. About 11, I recovered a little warmth: about twelve I began to sweat. I then strove to sleep but could not for thankfulness. I could do nothing but praise God till morning. And I then found myself so thoroughly recovered, that I went on to *Bristol*.

How amazing are the works of God! While all the young, able, lusty men sunk in the mighty waters and rose no more, a poor, feeble cripple, that had lost the use of one arm, after being so long tossed to and fro by the waves, is brought safe to land! How carefully ought I to devote the remainder of my life to God! How fearful ought I to be of offending so good a God, who has saved me in so wonderful a manner!

F I N I S.